



## **National Environmental Public Health Tracking Week**

### **Air Quality Fact Sheet**

#### **Air Quality and Asthma**

The Iowa and national Tracking Networks are helping us understand the relationship between asthma and the environment, which prepares us to respond and save lives. Exposure to outdoor air pollution can play a role in asthma attacks among adults and children with asthma.

Asthma is a disease that affects your lungs and makes breathing difficult. In the United States, about 25 million people live with asthma. Asthma affects people of all genders, races and ages. For some people, symptoms only appear when they are exposed to something that irritates their breathing. Other people have a kind of asthma that makes breathing difficult all of the time. We know that there is a connection between exposure to air pollution and asthma symptoms.

#### **About Asthma**

- ▶ A person with asthma has it all the time, but will only have attacks when something bothers their lungs.
- ▶ Exposure to certain things in the environment, called triggers, can cause an asthma attack. During an asthma attack, the sides of the airways in your lungs swell and the airways shrink. An asthma attack may include coughing, chest tightness, wheezing, and trouble breathing.
- ▶ Asthma attack triggers are different for every person. The most common indoor triggers for asthma include mold, dust, secondhand smoke, and pet dander. The most common outdoor triggers for asthma attacks are pollen, exercise, pesticides, air pollution, and traffic exhaust.
- ▶ The disease often starts in childhood and is more common in children than in adults.
- ▶ Asthma has no cure, but it can be controlled. If asthma is properly controlled, deaths, emergency room visits and hospital stays usually can be prevented.

#### **Iowa Public Health Tracking Portal**

Understanding the burden of asthma involves collecting data about people diagnosed and living with asthma and also collecting data about people who experience asthma attacks. Adults and children with asthma may be more sensitive to air pollution exposures such as ground level ozone and particulate matter. Air Quality data can help people understand how often they are exposed to unhealthy levels of air pollution. The Iowa Public Health Tracking portal has the following data:

Air Quality: <https://pht.idph.state.ia.us/environment/airquality/pages/default.aspx>

Air Quality and Asthma Data: <https://pht.idph.state.ia.us/environment/airquality/Pages/Air-Quality-and-Asthma.aspx>.

Learn more about the National Environmental Public Health Tracking at [www.cdc.gov/ephtracking](http://www.cdc.gov/ephtracking).